gods or Heavenly Emperors—earlier four—identified with the five elements, the five,directions (east, west, north, south, and center), and the five planets. It will be recalled, too, that the school of the Legalists, whose political precepts the Emperor followed, had been much influenced by Taoism, and that by the end of the Chou Taoism had in practice degenerated into magic and a search for an elixir of life. The Emperor was fearful of death and did not like to hear of it or of funerals. It is recorded that—presumably to avoid evil spirits, but possibly from fear of assassination—he did not permit any one to know the room in his great palace where he expected to spend the night, but commanded several chambers to be constantly in readiness for him. A popular belief had arisen—it has been suggested that it was an importation from the coastal races in the Northeast—in immortals who dwelt in sacred mountains and could teach mortals the secret of escaping death. Shih Huang Ti spent much energy in searching for the drug that would confer immortality. He is reported, at the suggestion of one of his advisers in this quest, to have sent into the eastern sea as a purchase price for it a company of youths and maidens of good families. These never were heard from again and it is asserted, although on no dependable grounds, that the expedition reached and colonized Japan.

This striving for immortality and this surrounding the habitation of the Emperor with mystery as well as magnificence may have been partly from the desire further to augment the imperial authority and the unity of the realm by making the monarch divine. Be that as it may, the search for the much-desired drug proved vain. Death overtook the Emperor while he was on one of

his journeys, away from his capital (B.C. 210). Li Ssu, who was with him at the time, feared rebellion if the demise were immediately known. He managed, therefore, to keep the fact a secret until the imperial entourage, bearing with it the body, returned to Hsien Yang.

The delay gave time for some of the more powerful of the company to arrange the succession to suit themselves. One of Shih Huang Ti's last acts had been to order a message sent to his eldest son, the heir apparent—still in exile on the northern frontier—to return to the capital with the funeral cortege and conduct the interment. Li Ssu, Chao Kao (a powerful eunuch),